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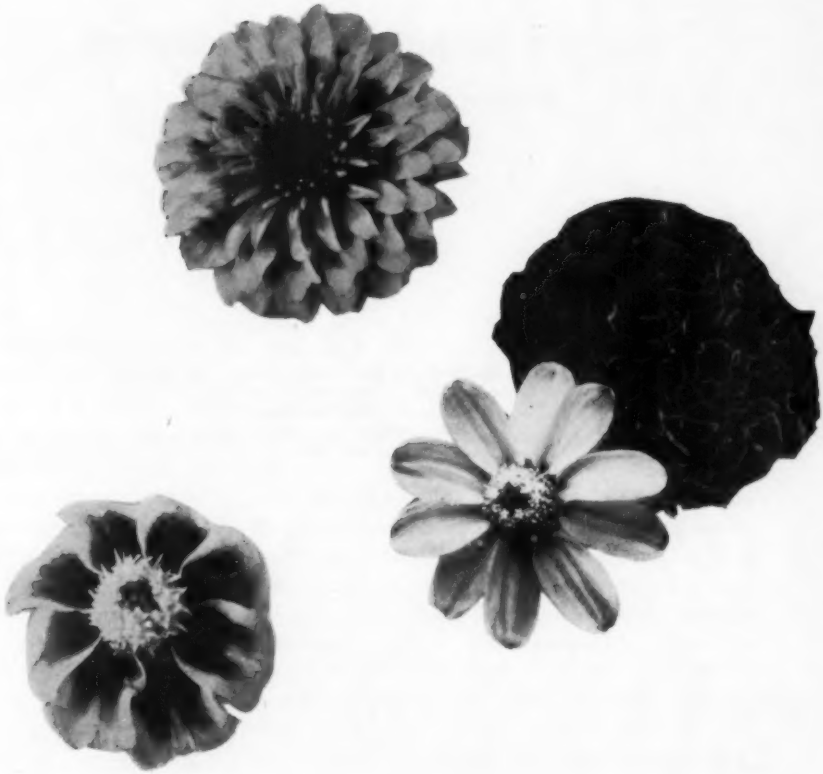

Recommended Annual Flowers for New York State

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R. E. Lee

An annual is a plant that produces a good display of flowers in one growing season, then dies in the fall because it has completed its life cycle or because it is killed by frost. Some plants (geraniums, Iceland poppies, mealy-cup sage), which may be perennial in habit in warmer areas, are treated as annuals in this climate.

Annuals are popular because they are versatile in use, are colorful, produce quick results, and are relatively inexpensive. They can be planted among young perennials to provide color until the permanent plants fill in the area. Most annuals have shallow root systems, and are adaptable to planting over spring-flowering bulbs such as tulips and narcissi. Dwarf types add summer color to rock gardens, or can be used as edging plants. Others are used in planters or window boxes. The majority are useful as bedding plants for mass effects. Only the more common annuals that are successful in New York State are covered in the following checklist.

In general, the best effect is created by massing the plants, setting them about one foot apart (the length of an average trowel). Small types such as sweet alyssum, lobelia, portulaca, dianthus, and alternanthera, however are usually more effective if planted six inches apart. Conversely, the annual bedding dahlias should be spaced at intervals of 1½ feet.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Height

The approximate height in average situations is given. A range as for *Zinnia elegans* (12" to 3') indicates there are different strains, some dwarf such as the cupid types, and others such as the giant and dahlia flowered types that grow to three feet.

Botanical name

The correct name is listed; a name in parenthesis is one under which the plant may be listed in some catalogs. The asterisk indicates the so-called hardy annuals, which often self-sow from one year to another, and may tolerate light frost. Seeds of hardy annuals may be sown in the garden in the fall or in the spring as soon as the ground can be worked.

Color

Only basic colors are listed. For instance, red often indicates a range from pink to rose, crimson or scarlet. The following is a key to color abbreviations.

B–Blue	L–Lavender	R–Red
Brn–Brown	O–Orange	V–Violet
C–Crimson	Pn–Pink	W–White
G–Green	Pr–Purple	Y–Yellow

What to plant

Practically all annuals will be more satisfactory and produce a quicker display of flowers if the plants are set in late May when there is no danger of frost. Plants may be purchased from greenhouses, nurseries, or garden centers, or seed may be started indoors by the gardener if he has facilities. Species such as ageratum, for which only plants are recommended, would have only a short flowering period at the end of the season if seed were sown directly out-of-doors, but plants will produce flowers during the entire growing season.

Situation

Tolerance (not necessity) of dry locations or of shaded areas is indicated. Sun identifies those that perform best in full sun light.

Special uses

Bed — useful in mass as bedding plants.

Box — useful in planters or window boxes.

Dried — material can be dried for use in winter arrangements.

Edge — useful as an edging plant.

Foliage — the plant is grown only for its foliage effect. Flowers are usually insignificant.

RG — useful in rock garden.

Screen — those vines that are dense and luxuriant enough in growth to produce a screening effect.

Height	Botanical name	Common name	Color	What to plant	Blooming season	Situation	Special uses	Approx. days to germination	Approx. number seed per ounce
12"	*Ageratum houstoniaum*	Ageratum	B Pn V W	Plants	Long	Average dry	Bed, box	14	214,000
* 2'-3'	*Antirrhinum majus*	Snapdragon	L R Y W	Plants	Long	Average	Cut	14	220,000
6"	*Antirrhinum* (dwarf)	Dwarf snapdragon	L R Y W	Plants	Long	Average	RG, box	14	220,000
12"	*Browallia speciosa*	Browallia	B-V W	Plants	Long	Shade	Box	35	70,000
*15"-24"	*Calendula officinalis*	Calendula	O Y	Plants, seed	Long	Average	Cut	14	4,000
2'	*Callistephus chinensis*	China aster	B Pr R W	Plants, seed	Short-late	Average	Cut	10	12,000
15"	*Catharanthus roseus* (*Vinca rosea*)	Periwinkle	Pn R W	Plants	Long	Average	Bed, box	14	22,000
10"-20"	*Celosia argentea var. cristata*	Cockscomb	R Y	Plants, seed	Long	Dry	Dried	6-10	30,000
2'-4'	*Celosia argentea var. plumosa* – tall form	Plume cockscomb	R Y	Plants, seed	Mid-late	Dry	Cut, dried	6-10	30,000
12"	– dwarf form	Plume cockscomb	R Y	Plants, seed	Long	Dry	Cut, box, bed, dried	6-10	30,000
6"	*Centaurea candidissima*	Dusty miller	——	Plants	——	Average	Foliage	25	7,000
* 2'	*Centaurea cyanus*	Bachelors button	B R W	Plants, seed	Short	Average	Cut	15	7,000
2'	*Centaurea gymnocarpa*	Dusty miller	——	Plants	——	Average	Foliage	18	7,000
4'	*Cleome spinosa*	Spider flower	Pn Pr W	Plants, seed	Long	Dry	Background	15	12,500
12"	*Convolvulus tricolor*	Dwarf bush morning glory	B Pn W	Seed	Long	Average	RG, edge	10	1,400
18"	*Coreopsis basalis*	Golden wave coreopsis	Y	Seed	Long	Dry	Cut	14	100,000
*12"-36"	*Coreopsis tinctoria*	Calliopsis	R Y	Seed	Long	Dry	Cut	14	100,000
3'-4'	*Cosmos bipinnatus*	Cosmos	C P W	Plants, seed	Long	Dry	Cut	10-14	5,500
2½'-3	*Cosmos sulfureus*	Yellow cosmos	Y O	Plants, seed	Long	Dry	Cut	14	3,000
12"	*Cuphea ignea* (*C. platycentra*)	Cigar flower	R	Plants	Long	Average	Novelty, box	—	——
* 12"	*Cuphea llavea*	Firecracker flower	R Pr	Seed	Long	Average	——	20	7,000
2'	*Cynoglossum amabile*	Chinese forget-me-not	B	Plants, seed	Short-late	Average, dry	——	10	5,300
2'-3'	*Dahlia pinnata*, dwarf annual types	Dahlia	Various	Plants	Mid-late	Sun	Cut, bed	10	3,000
* 3'	*Delphinium ajacis*	Larkspur	B Pn V W	Seed	Short	½ shade	Cut	18	10,000
* 12"	*Dianthus chinensis*	China pink	Pn R W	Seed	Long	Average	Cut	10	28,000

Height	Botanical name	Common name	Color	What to plant	Blooming season	Situation	Special uses	Approx. days to germination	Approx. number seed per ounce
10"	*Dimorphotheca sp.*	Cape marigold	O Y W	Seed	Short	Dry	RG	18	10,000
* 15"	*Eschscholzia californica*	California poppy	O R Y W	Seed	Medium	Dry	RG	10	15,000
2'	*Euphorbia marginata*	Snow on the mountain	W	Seed	Short-late	Average	Foliage	10	2,500
* 2'	*Gaillardia pulchella*	Basket flower	R Y	Plants, seed	Long	Dry	Cut	18	15,000
9"-18"	*Gomphrena globosa*	Globe amaranth	O Pr R W	Plants, seed	Mid-late	Dry	Cut, dried	15	5,800
* 18"	*Gypsophila elegans*	Annual babys breath	W	Seed	Short	Dry	Cut, RG	14	25,000
6'-8'	*Helianthus annus* single	Sunflower	Y	Seed	Short-late	Dry	——	12	9,000
4'-5'	*Helianthus annus* double chrysanthemum flowered	Double sunflower	Y	Seed	Short-late	Dry	Back-ground	12	700
2½'	*Helichrysum bracteatum*	Strawflower	O R W Y	Seed	Short-late	Dry	Cut, dried	14	45,000
2'	*Heliotropium arborescens*	Heliotrope	Pr W	Plants	Long	Average	Fragrant	21	55,000
15"	*Helipterum roseum (Acroclinium)*	Everlasting	Pn W	Seed	Short-late	Dry	Cut, dried	14-20	9,000
15"	*Hunnemannia fumariaefolia*	Santa barbara poppy	Y	Seed	Short-late	Average	Cut	14	8,550
* 1'	*Iberis umbellata*	Annual candytuft	Pr R W	Plants, seed	Short	½ shade, dry	Cut	14	10,000
8"-2'	*Impatiens balsamina*	Garden balsam	R W	Plants, seed	Long	½ shade	——	12	3,500
6"-18"	*Impatiens sultana* or *I. holstii*	Sultana	O R W	Plants, seed	Long	Shade	Bed	15	60,000
2'	*Kochia scoparia*	Summer, cypress, burning bush	——	Seed	——	Sun, dry	Foliage	10	45,000
12"	*Lantana* sp.	Lantana	L O R Y	Plants	Long	Sun	Box	45	1,300
3'	*Lavatera trimestris*	Lavatera	Pn W	Seed	Long	Average	——	14-35	5,500
2½'	*Limonium* sp.	Statice	L Pn W Y	Seed	Late	Dry	Cut, dried	20	350
6"	*Lobelia erinus*	Annual lobelia	B Pr R	Plants, seed	Long	Shade	RG, box, edge	10-15	750,000
* 6"	*Lobularia maritima*	Sweet alyssum	V W	Plants, seed	Long	Shade	Fragrant	15	1,650
1'-2'	*Matthiola incana*	Stocks	B L R W Y	Seed	Short	Average	Cut	8	19,000
2'	*Molucella laevis*	Bells of Ireland	G	Plants, seed	Medium	Average	Cut	30	42,000
9"	*Nierembergia hippomanica*	Cup flower	B L	Plants, seed	Long	Average, dry	RG, box	18	175,000
* 3'	*Nicotiana alata*	Flowering tobacco	W	Seed	Long	Shade	Fragrant	10	200,000
* 3'	*Nicotiana sanderae*	Red tobacco	R	Seed	Long	Shade	——	10	200,000
* 15'	*Nigella damascena*	Love-in-a-mist	B	Seed	Short	Average	Cut	14	12,000

Height	Botanical name	Common name	Color	What to plant	Blooming season	Situation	Special uses	Approx. days to germination	Approx. number seed per ounce
*1'-2'	*Papaver nudicaule*	Iceland poppy	O Pn W Y	Seed	Short	Dry, sun	——	12	448,000
* 2'	*Papaver rhoeas*	Shirley poppy	O R W Y	Seed	Short	Dry, sun	——	12	72,500
10"-18"	*Petunia hybrida*	Petunia	Pr R W	Plants	Long	Average	Bed, box	10	262,000
15"	*Phlox drummondii*	Annual phlox	Pr R W Y	Plants, seed	Long	½ shade	Cut	12	18,000
6"	*Portulaca grandiflora*	Portulaca	O R W Y	Plants, seed	Long	Dry, sun	RG	14	300,000
15"	*Reseda odorata*	Mignonette	Y	Seed	Long	Average	Cut, fragrant	12	30,000
6'	*Ricinus communis*	Castor oil bean	——	Plants, seed	——	Dry, sun	Foliage	15	30
* 2½'	*Rudbeckia bicolor*	Coneflower	Y O Brn	Plants, seed	Long	Dry	——	18	85,000
*3'-4'	*Rudbeckia* 'Gloriosa Daisy'	Gloriosa daisy	Y O Brn	Plants, seed		Average	——	20	80,000
2'	*Salpiglossis sinuata*	Salpiglossis	Pr R Y	Seed	Long	Average	Cut	14	125,000
3'	*Salvia farinacea*	Mealy cup sage	B Pr W	Plants	Long	Shade	Cut, dried	18	24,000
2'	*Salvia splendens* tall	Scarlet sage	R W	Plants	Long	Shade	Bed	14	7,500
10"	dwarf	Scarlet sage	R W	Plants	Long	Shade	Bed	14	7,500
6"	*Sanvitalia procumbens*	Creeping zinnia	Y	Seed	Long	Dry	RG	10	50,250
2'-3'	*Scabiosa atropurpurea*	Annual scabiosa, pincushion flower	Pr Pn W	Seed	Long	Average	Cut	18	4,500
30"	*Tagetes erecta*	African marigold or American marigold	O Y	Plants, seed	Short-late	Dry	Cut	8	11,000
8"-16"	*Tagetes patula*	French marigold	O R Y	Plants, seed	Long	Dry	Cut, box, bed	8	10,000
12"	*Tagetes tenuifolia* var. *pumila* (*T. signata*)	Signet marigold or Scotch marigold	Y	Plants, seed	Long	Dry	Cut	8	9,000
3'-4'	*Tithonia* sp.	Tithonia	R	Seed	Mid-late	Dry	Background	25	4,000
12"	*Torenia fournieri*	Wishbone flower	Pr W	Plants	Long	Shade	RG, box	14	375,000
2'	*Trachymene caerulea* (*Didiscus*)	Didiscus, blue lace flower	B W	Seed	Short	Average	Cut	13	10,300
12"	*Tropaeolum minus*	Nasturtium	O R Y	Seed	Long	Dry	RG, box, cut, fragrant	13	250
6"-12"	*Verbena hybrida*	Verbena	B Pr R W	Plants	Long	Shade	RG, box, cut, fragrant	14	12,500
12"	*Viola tricolor* var. *hortensis*	Pansy	Various	Seed	Short	Shade	Cut	14	22,000
18"	*Zinnia angustifolia*	Mexican zinnia	Various	Plants, seed	Long	Dry	Cut, bed	7-14	3,000
12"-3'	*Zinnia elegans*	Zinnia	Various	Plants, seed	Long	Dry	Cut, bed	7-14	3,000
15"	*Zinnia linearis*	——	O	Plants, seed	Long	Dry	Cut, bed	10	4,000

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ANNUAL VINES									
	Calonyction aculeatum	Moonflower vine	W	Seed	Short	Average	Screen	50-60	120
	Cobaea scandens	Cathedral bells	Pr	Seed	Medium	Average	Screen	21	400
	Dolichos lablab	Hyacinth bean	Pr W	Seed	Medium	Average	Screen	10	115
	Ipomea sp.	Morning glory	B Pr R	Seed	Long	Shade	Screen	21	700
	Lathyrus odoratus	Sweet pea	L R W	Seed	Short	Shade	Cut, fragrant	10-14	390
	Vinca major		——	Plants	——	Average	Foliage, box	—	——
TENDER PLANTS TREATED AS ANNUALS									
9"	*Alternanthera* sp.	Telanthera	——	Plants	——	Average,	Foliage	—	——
6"-12"	*Begonia semperflorens*	Begonia	R W	Plants	Long	Shade	Bed, box	18	950,000
2'-3'	*Coleus blumei*	Coleus	——	Plants	——	Shade	Foliage, box, bed	14	115,000
6"-2'	*Pelargonium hortorum*	Geranium	R W	Plants	Long	Sun	Cut, bed, box	35	6,000